

Prospects for Peace in Colombia:  
Plan Colombia and the El Salvador Experience

A Monograph  
by  
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Signal

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May 2000

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Title of Monograph: *Prospects for Peace in Colombia:  
Plan Colombia and the El Salvador Experience*

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Accepted this 30th Day of April 2000

## ABSTRACT

### PROSPECTS FOR PEACE IN COLOMBIA: PLAN COLOMBIA AND THE EL SALVADOR EXPERIENCE by COL Patrick J. Shaha

As the year 2000 begins, the disintegration of Colombia in a situation of violence, political unrest, and economic upheaval is a very real threat to the national interests of the United States. It is critical that Washington's concern for failed states, such as Yugoslavia, apply to the Western Hemisphere as well. Ramifications of Colombia's demise are at least as important for the hemisphere as the fragmentation of Yugoslavia has been for Europe.

Beyond the imminent threat to stability in the region, the 40-year old insurgency now torturing Colombia also poses an urgent dilemma for defense of the United States from the scourge of narcotraffic, for loss of Colombia as a lucrative trade partner, for protection of the Andean and Amazon environments from dangerous pollutants, and for the threat to promotion of democracy and humanitarian principles so close to the United States. In spite of years of engagement activities with the Colombian military and other government agencies, progress toward a solution has been elusive.

Many of the ineffective political actions pursued by both Bogota and Washington, as well as the historical patterns in Colombia of violence, corruption, and upheaval, have striking similarities to event and policies from the United States experience in El Salvador during the 1980s. In an address to the United Nations on 20 September, 1999, the President of Colombia, Andres Pastrana, sought international support for a sweeping strategy intended to resolve the problems and bring peace to Colombia.

Designated Plan Colombia, the strategy provides a comprehensive, visionary approach for action to return Colombia as a contributor to hemispheric prosperity and to prevent its potential "balkanization," a situation which could spread unabated throughout the region.. The plan incorporates many of the lessons learned in El Salvador and can, if fully implemented, provide the environment for peace in Colombia. The best reason for supporting Plan Colombia with aid is that it will help in the search for a negotiated settlement for lasting peace, the strategic objective of both the U.S. and Colombia, by confronting the insurgents and paramilitaries with a credible threat. While it is important that the fight to eliminate drug trafficking continues, it is just as vital that peace efforts be successful to ultimately resolve the Colombia problem. Merely sending politically motivated aid without a long-term strategy, just hoping for success, will only make the situation worse.

The war in Colombia threatens the entire region with the undermining of democracy, political stability and regional security, and the acceleration of illegal immigration. Any consideration for not supporting the plan, and failing to provide appropriate aid to Colombia, must also consider the cost of failure of Plan Colombia.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The stability and prosperity of Latin America are of extreme importance to the interests of the United States, and in some areas, arguably of vital interest. Dr. Donald E. Schultz of Cleveland State University states:

... in a hemisphere that is increasingly integrated and interdependent, the growth and prosperity of the Latin America economies will profoundly affect the prosperity of the United States. The Latin American and Caribbean nations have already become the United States' fastest growing export market, with exports in 1998 expected to exceed those going to the European Union. By 2010, indeed, overall U.S. trade with the region is projected to exceed that with Europe and Japan combined. ... Venezuela alone provides as much oil to the United States as do all of the Persian Gulf states together. The continued provision of Venezuelan and Mexican petroleum, as well as access to the major new oil reserves of Colombia, constitutes an important--and arguably vital--U.S. interest with directly affects national well-being.<sup>1</sup>

The promotion of democracy is expected to lead to governments legitimate in the eyes of the governed, and thus to stability. When there is less likelihood of internal strife or wars with neighbors, the people can turn attentions to peacefully and cooperatively solving more progressive issues like resolving border disputes, preserving the environmental, and preventing drug trafficking.

With the exception of Cuba, the governments of Latin America have shifted remarkably in recent years toward democracy, peace, and stability. The shift has not always been smooth. El Salvador agonized through twelve years of civil war before becoming the first modern nation to implement peace accords which not only stopped the bloody conflict, but also removed the root causes of the civil war by transforming Salvadoran society.

The successes in Latin America have often come in spite of United States foreign policies. El Salvador was characterized by years of wealth and power being concentrated in the hands of a small oligarchy who either ensured that the presidency and political power was held by one of their own, or had a military strong man installed who would do their bidding--for a price. Through election fraud and heavy-handed tactics, opposition was forcefully suppressed. The depth of social

injustice and absence of any democratic option for redress led to open rebellion and revolution.

The United States failed to take the actions that could have alleviated the suffering in El Salvador. U.S. policy often touted the moral high ground of human rights while providing aid and reinforcement to the very institutions repressing the people of El Salvador. Moral ambiguities reinforced by U.S. policies were often interpreted as a green light for abuse of power. Over a ten year period, the U.S. injected over \$5 billion into El Salvador to prop up corrupt governments and equip and train the El Salvadoran Armed Forces (ESAF) to prosecute a war to halt the spread of communism in the region. In the process, the ESAF expanded to five times its peacetime size (about 60,000 men in a country the size of Massachusetts). Coupled with the country's sizable security forces (about 10,000), and under direction of their oligarchic benefactors, the ESAF emerged as a law unto itself in ridding the country of anyone deemed dangerous to the status quo. At the end of the war there were over 75,000 dead, mostly civilian non-combatants murdered by "death squads," and over one million refugees and displaced persons.<sup>2</sup>

By comparison, though touted as the country in Latin America with the longest history of civil democratic rule, Colombia's version of democracy has been shaped by another set of oligarchic power brokers, resulting in the current extremely troubling turmoil. There is a very real danger of the situation deteriorating into a "balkanization" of the region, of establishing regional warlords, and of the violence spreading to neighboring nations. Accounting for over \$12 billion annually in two-way trade, Colombia's well-being is vital to the U.S.<sup>3</sup>

Multiple groups with ample funding and backing are pulling Colombia in many directions, inciting violence, funding the corruption of local and national authorities, and causing major impacts on the national economy. The government is literally losing ground to a Marxist guerrilla movement (ceding control of about one third of the eastern part of the country as a demilitarized zone) which finances its operations through taxes on the drug trade, kidnapping, and many business investments.

Facing less than effective government response to the threat, right-wing paramilitaries are waging a war against the guerrillas, feeding the spiraling violence racking the country and themselves falling prey to the lure of narco-dollars.

Illegal drugs cost the U.S. an estimated \$110 billion every year and are responsible for over 14,000 deaths of U.S. citizens annually. The mafias controlling the illegal drug traffic are spreading corruption and violence, subverting governments and institutions, and undermining the sovereignty of nations. The decentralization of the drug mafias, and the relocation to Colombia of hemispheric production of cocaine, and now of heroin, has proven that past strategies have not solved the problem.<sup>4</sup>

As with the war in El Salvador, it is in the strategic interest of the U.S. to resolve the predicament in Colombia. This paper will compare the situations of the two countries and consider whether the peace plan proposed by President Pastrana of Colombia, his Plan Colombia, has incorporated the lessons learned from the experience in El Salvador.

## **Chapter 2: The Colombia Situation**

**We are proud, both among ourselves and before outsiders, of being a model democracy, but the fact that a political dictatorship does not exist impedes us from recognizing the dominion of terror, of abuse, and of contempt for the law, in which all of the identical phenomena of a dictatorship are met, while we insist that we are avoiding them.<sup>5</sup>**

**Colombian President Alfonso Lopez, 1991**

Much of the present situation of turmoil in Colombia is rooted in a historic past characterized by strong partisanism, weak central government, weak security and law enforcement elements, and an overpowering oligarchy using political violence to ensure things remained so while they profited economically. With the army and police forces deliberately kept weak to ensure these institutions did not enter politics, real law enforcement, especially in the rural areas, generally ended up in private hands. Some history of Colombia will help understanding the current situation.

The violence in Colombia is attributed not to ethnic or tribal conflict as is so prevalent elsewhere, but to four primary groups: subversive groups (insurgents who now understand that, given the circumstances, they will not be able to take power via armed struggle), paramilitary groups ("autodefensas" seeking an end to all guerrilla activities and political recognition for their organization), narcotrafficking organizations, and common criminals taking advantage of the unstable situation. The lines between the groups is often very blurry, and the great majority of Colombians are caught in the crossfire. Michael Shifter, a senior fellow at the Inter-American Dialogue in Washington, D.C., states the violence is attributed to three tendencies:

1. The crucial political role of violence--a long history the use of violence to control internal politics
2. Weakening of the state's capacity and effectiveness--the system being unable to adapt to increasing demands and pressures, a direct link existing between the development of guerrilla activity and the absence of government presence in some areas of the country
3. Development of the criminal drug economy--grown over the last 15 years to equal 25-35 percent of Colombia's legal exports<sup>6</sup>



Colombia has boasted a long history of civilian rule, having only one military dictatorship in each of the 19th and 20th centuries. But there is an equally long history of the use of violence as a means of controlling internal politics which continues today.

Spanish conquest of the sparsely populated area dates to the beginning of the 16th century. Geography and distance made control difficult for the captaincy in Bogota, resulting in a weak central government with the real power being controlled by large landowners supported by the Catholic church. The Spanish crown granted indigenous people to the landowners as workers, the landowners being charged with caring for and Christianizing them in exchange for their labor. But the scarcity of settled and peaceful Indians willing to submit to this life of enlightenment led to the trade in African slaves for laborers.<sup>7</sup>

The first civil war, from 1838 to 1842, raged primarily over religious issues and land holdings, and established a pattern of violence for resolving differences that remains today. By the middle of the 19th century, an alternative to the colonial *latifundia* society was established, that of mercantile capital. Artisans, and their associated merchants, began to compete with the Jesuit-founded "Catholic Societies." These two groups evolved into the political parties: the Conservative Party of the *latifundia* (landed rich with their peasant laborers) and the Catholic church; and the Liberal Party of the merchants and artisans.

As the two parties developed, both declared themselves democratic and multiclass; ethnicity had no bearing on party affiliation. Both defended liberty, justice, order, political and religious tolerance, and both were averse to dictatorships. The Liberals stood for federalism, free trade, and were anticlerical (opposed to clerical activism outside the sphere of religion). The Conservatives espoused unitary government, protectionism, and were proclerical (often using the church to mobilize the masses for their cause). Their differences, particularly regarding religion, were the cause of great contention. Eight civil wars were fought in the 19th century, the worst (1899-1902) resulted in over

100,000 dead (mostly poor peasants), many more seriously injured, and a ruined economy.

During the term of General Hilario Lopez (1849-1853), the merchants were able to implement reforms that all but destroyed the old colonial *latifundia* structure. The abolition of the tobacco monopoly led to free cultivation and commercialization of the crop. The elimination of Indian reservations led to free cultivation of the land and access to Indian labor. In 1851, the emancipation of the 20,000 remaining slaves finally led to another bloody civil war since the landowners depended heavily on slave labor.

As a result of the intense violence and sufferings inflicted on the peasants by one party or the other in these wars, party alignments developed along with strong internal personal alliances that remain today, passed down from generation to generation. Other distinctions, such as social class or ethnic origin, became secondary to party. The elites, the oligarchy, were much less dogmatic in their party affiliation, and often established coalitions when overly dictatorial presidents needed ousting, or when elite-instigated violence got out of control. To maintain control and ensure power was exercised "correctly," the oligarchy would either use a system of parity wherein a member from both parties would serve in the same ministerial position, or would support a joint candidate. Both of these strategies have been common practices ever since.<sup>8</sup>

By 1930, Colombia was characterized as a sectarian democracy with a weak civilian government where violence was used to achieve political goals, a view reinforced by the consistent granting of amnesty to the losing side in a civil war. The Conservatives persisted in using religion against the Liberals, whose policies were clearly detrimental to the interests of the big landowners and of the church. The 1930 elections were marked by division within the Conservative Party, a global depression, and use of the army to suppress another banana worker strike. The result was a power shift to the Liberals, the first change in the presidential party since the 1886 Constitution had been ratified.

The Constitution provided for the president to name all department governors, which meant a change in mayors and ultimately police officers. The past set of Conservative officials had been more likely to deal harshly with Liberal party members, so the change in authority was met with, true to the established pattern, violence, primarily from police clashing with peasants wanting to improve their land access situations. The brutality was a foreshadowing of things to come.<sup>9</sup>

From 1930 to 1974, Colombian politics endured constant partisan contention, the key players being the elite elements of both parties. The significant growth in population brought an increase in competition for land. With over half the best land owned by three percent of the landholders, the competition caused significant migration to the cities where the *campesinos* were offered new opportunities with less influence from the church and the oligarchy. The Liberal Party began to split over the issue of reforms, with the more radical elements pushing for equitable economic redistribution and equal political participation. The Liberal Party split became so wide that it brought the Conservatives to power in 1946.<sup>10</sup>

With the change in power, and the commensurate change in bureaucratic jobs and influence, violence broke out almost immediately and there was a partial breakdown of the state. The battle for political majority, known as *La Violencia*, in a political system with a zero-sum game for supremacy and economic advantage, resulted in over 200,000 dead, again mostly poor peasants. The change in law enforcement officials meant the peasants aligned with the Conservative Party could now take lands from those aligned with the Liberals (often the same lands taken in the 1930 change of power). Reactions aggravated by the 9 April 1948 assassination of Jorge Gaitan, leader of the radical Liberal element, brought about the burning of churches in Bogota. The Catholic church, in a country which touted itself as the "most Catholic in the world," placed itself firmly behind the Conservative government; priests refused the sacraments to Liberals, and one bishop threatened to excommunicate anyone voting for a Liberal. Many long-standing grievances resurfaced (land, crops, water rights,

etc).

The violence was purely along party lines, a continuation of historical conflicts, and continued for nearly twenty years. A generation of Colombians grew up thinking violence was a normal way of life. Unable to find employment and feeling disenfranchised by the government, many turned to banditry and some to revolution and class-oriented goals.<sup>11</sup>

The 1953 coup of General Rojas Pinilla ended "democratic" government until 1958. His offer of amnesty and government aid induced many of the flourishing guerrilla bands to cease fighting. He moved the police from under the Ministry of Interior to the Armed Forces in an effort to depoliticize it. He relaxed press censorship, released political prisoners, and initiated many public works projects. But the root causes of the violence remained, with no real reconstruction of Colombian society. In 1957 General Rojas lost the support of the military, the people and the church (he was a Conservative) and left the country.

During the next sixteen years, Colombia underwent an experiment with "consociational democracy"--the sharing of power by both the traditional parties--under the National Front (FN). It was a constitutional mechanism to divide all national power equally between the two parties, to end military governments and eliminate the competition between the parties that had caused all the violence. Though successful in these goals, the experiment resulted in other unanticipated affects which served to aggravate the causes of the violence and further weaken the state's ability to deal with the situation.<sup>12</sup>

Since both parties would share equally, there was really no reason to vote except to show civic responsibility or to indicate preference of one faction over party another. Since there were no party disincentives, factions proliferated and further aggravated the growing difficulty of getting anything done in the legislature. Each one-term president sat down to a lame duck administration from his first day in office. All factors prevented the government from resolving any of the root

socio-economic causes of the violence. The FN experiment ended with the Constitutional Reform of 1968 which provided for phasing in competitive seats in the legislatures and full political participation for new parties by 1974.<sup>13</sup>

From 1974 to 1994, all but one presidency was Liberal. As each administration changed, with a weak central government either unable or unwilling to give attention to the plight of rural Colombia, violence in the countryside flourished. The conspicuous absence of government presence in the rural areas served as a catalyst for guerrilla groups seeking political voice. The principal guerrilla groups operating in Colombia were:

1. National Liberation Army (ELN): communist movement founded in 1964 by Colombian students studying in Cuba; lack of a political party and mass appeal have stagnated growth; focused on disruption of the oil industry in northern Colombia by attacking pipelines causing enormous ecological damage; periodic kidnappings of foreign employees for large ransoms; extortion and bombings against foreign businesses; forced protection payments on coca and opium growers; generally alienates itself from the public by its actions
2. People's Liberation Army (EPL): pro-Chinese, adopted the "prolonged people's war" strategy, nearly exterminated, came to terms with GOC in 1990 (small dissident faction was still active in 1993)
3. 19th of April Movement (M-19): first appeared in 1974, named for the date on which the 1970 presidential election was "stolen" from Rojas Pinilla; included dissident members of the Communist party, FARC, and other socialist groups; substituted daring political military feats for building any planned political movement; conducted 1980 kidnapping of party guests at the Dominican embassy in Bogota (including U.S. ambassador); signed pact with GOC, disarmed, and entered legitimate political arena in 1989
4. Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC): founded in 1966 as military wing of Colombian Communist Party, with roots deeper in time as people's response to official violence and militarist aggression during the 40's and 50's; anti-U.S. since inception; goal is to overthrow GOC and ruling class; established legal party Union Patriótica after 1984 truce, now one of the two major Colombian guerrilla movements (along with ELN); mature leadership with long political experience; attacks political and military targets, conducts kidnappings and bank robberies, forces protection payments on coca and opium growers; occasional operations in Venezuela, Panama, and Ecuador<sup>14</sup>

Government of Colombia (GOC) attempts to deal with the guerrillas have historically failed.

Attempts to negotiate during the Lopez administration (1974-1978) were blocked by the army who believed they could defeat the guerrillas. In 1982, President Betancur formed a Peace Commission to resolve the guerrilla situation. A law was implemented granting amnesty (except for non-combat murders and exceptional cruelty) to all in armed conflict with the government as of 20 November. The initiative was based on the interpretation that the guerrilla violence was the reaction to poverty, injustice and the lack of possibility for political participation. In 1984 agreements were made with the FARC, EPL, and M-19, for a one-year cease-fire with provisions to expedite return of the guerrillas to "democratic life" and with a program to rehabilitate the peasant areas affected by the violence. By the end of 1985, however, the amnesty effort had met with limited success, the negotiations had failed, and the violence continued. In his announcement to return to combat, the leader of M-19 is quoted as saying:

The problem is that the oligarchy does not want to give up anything because they think that the solution for this country comes from submission and silencing not only of the guerrilla movement but also of the democratic sectors and of the new forces that want a different life.<sup>15</sup>

In 1989, President Barco proved more flexible in negotiations and concluded agreements with the EPL and with M-19 (which became a political party for the 1990 elections); both demobilized. The FARC and ELN, working together through the Simon Bolivar Guerrilla Coordinator, continued their kidnappings and attacks on the infrastructure (spilling more oil into the Orinoco River basin than the *Exxon Valdez* did in Alaska). Instead of negotiating with the remaining guerrillas, President Cesar Gaviria's administration (1990-1994) stressed training and equipping counterinsurgency forces.

Further evidence of the weakening of GOC control of the internal situation was the alarming growth of paramilitary groups during the Belisario Betancur administration, another symptom of a partial breakdown of the state and its inability to provide internal security. The president admitted in

1983 that these groups were responsible for twice as many homicides as the guerrillas. Some of the paramilitaries had been established by the drug traffickers to attack other groups trying to kidnap traffickers for ransom. Some were "autodefensas" or self-defense groups, many organized with government assistance, to combat the guerrilla groups in remote areas. Some were groups bent on ridding their towns and cities of addicts, the homeless, and gays. Evidence suggests that some military leaders, unhappy with the Betancur peace negotiations, provided weapons, training and supplies to paramilitary groups. Sizes of the known groups ranged from a few members to as many as 350. Though Carlos Castano, leader of the United Self-defense Groups of Colombia (AUC), has claimed to speak for the paramilitary groups, his control of their activities is questionable. Often larger and better armed than the law enforcement elements, and with the government able to control less and less of the territory outside the cities, many of these groups acted as a law unto themselves. In many remote regions, they performed much of the governmental functions in the areas of justice, health, and education.<sup>16</sup>

On a third front for the troubled and overwhelmed GOC, and as a result of major drug interdiction efforts in Mexico, Colombia's role in the international drug market began expanding rapidly around 1975. Impacts of the tremendous illicit profits from the drug trade on the Colombian economy were apparent as early as 1980:

- contributed about 6% of the 30% annual inflation rate and 15-18% to the growth of its money supply
- jeopardized Colombian financial institutions and economic planning
- diverted large sums of government funds, sorely needed elsewhere, to suppress cultivation and trafficking
- contributed substantially to Colombia becoming a food-importer by diverting crop land and labor to drug production
- reduced funds available for legitimate lending and raised credit rates to the point borrowers had to turn to illegal sources
- increased tax evasion
- penetrated and/or gained control of legitimate private corporations
- became largest source of dollars in the underground economy and added millions to the nation's foreign-exchange surplus
- grossly inflated the value of farm land, property, goods, services, and even art

work in trafficking areas<sup>17</sup>

In 1984, when Justice Minister Lara Bonilla was assassinated by thugs hired by the drug traffickers, the Betancur administration decreed a state of siege over the entire country. Raids were conducted against property of suspected drug dealers, aerial spraying programs were implemented against marijuana fields, and the extradition treaty with the U.S. began to be enforced. The dealers suggested negotiations similar to those with the guerrillas, but the government declined. President Barco gave negotiations a chance, but after the murder of Liberal leader Luis Carlos Galan, the GOC declared war on the drug traffickers. Processing labs were destroyed, dealers were arrested and extradited, and property was seized. The dealers responded with bombings. Between August 1989 and August 1990, over a thousand people died from the drug violence, including over 200 police in Medellin. President Gaviria, the new Constitution ratified in 1991 having ruled out extradition, allowed traffickers to turn themselves in, confess to at least one crime, and receive reduced penalties where convicted. The new policy did not end the trafficking, but did end the terrorism.<sup>18</sup>

Evidence of the pervasive corrupting effects of the illegal drug profits came crashing down on the GOC when it was made known that President Ernesto Samper, elected in 1994, was aware his presidential campaign had been financed with some \$6 million from drug traffickers. The revelation initiated a downturn in U.S.-Colombia relations. For the first time since the drug certification mechanism was adopted in 1986, Colombia was decertified in 1996, and again in 1997, for its supposed failure to cooperate in the war on drugs. Despite significant progress during the period (capture of Cali cartel leaders, big eradication results, legislation to seize properties and increase sentences in drug cases, etc.), the U.S. linked progress on drugs with the departure from power of President Samper, a policy which contributed directly to the current crisis by undermining the GOC.<sup>19</sup>

The drug trade has become a serious destabilizing force in global democratic society. In



Colombia alone it provides as much as \$600 million annually to illegal armed bands, both insurgents and paramilitaries, in return for their protection of the cultivation, processing and trafficking activities. Though there is some dispute about the extent of drug profits shared by the armed groups, the modern arsenal displayed by FARC members attending recent peace talks indicates possibly expanding sources of support through impressive connections to Eastern Europe and former Soviet bloc arms markets, where growing cocaine consumption is apparently the source of either drugs for guns or significant black market arms purchases.<sup>20</sup>

Drug revenues have also been responsible for a type of land counter-reform, where rich land owners have been selling overvalued lands to the drug lords, glad to be rid of them in the face of the tax-extorting guerrillas. The new land holdings have further aggravated rural inequalities and land poverty. To protect their holdings, the drug lords have built paramilitaries to fight the guerrillas and were at one time seen as potential counter insurgent allies by the military until the army realized the paramilitaries were as big a threat to the state as were the guerrillas.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to the guerrillas, paramilitaries, and drug traffickers, ordinary law breakers and common criminals have taken advantage of the breakdown of the rule of law. The Colombian sociologist Alvaro Camacho estimated that 75-80 percent of the violence in Cali have had nothing to do with political issues but rather with common crimes (robbery, brawls, settling accounts on debts or property, marital and family violence). Homicide had become the leading cause of death in Colombia.<sup>22</sup>

The people of Colombia have become weary of the violence, as they showed in unprecedented massive peaceful public demonstrations in 1991, the forming of the National Conciliation Commission at the end of the Samper years, and most recently in the 1997 plebiscite "Mandate for Peace" which received 10 million votes. The breakup of the Soviet Union, along with Cuba's economic problems, has eliminated the official foreign support for a leftist takeover. The

lower classes never really came together in a populist movement because of their split between the traditional parties. Recent developments have reduced the likelihood of the guerrillas winning a takeover war, but the war can now go on indefinitely with drug financing while large areas of the country have been lost to guerilla control.

Colombia is in the throes of its worst economic downturn in 70 years with unemployment at an historic high of almost 20% and three successive quarters of negative growth in domestic production. Increasing fiscal debt (over 4% of GDP), inflation rate (over 20%), and unemployment (12% in '97, over 20% most recently), coupled with increasing violence and commensurate loss of investor confidence, have all contributed to a most difficult economic situation. Extensive damage from recent floods and earthquakes, along with falling coffee and other commodity prices, have combined to intensify Colombia's difficulties with rising fiscal deficits and banking problems. The on-going conflict and domestic security situation are reinforcing an erosion of confidence in the economy. As legal employment opportunities continue to disappear due to the recession, more Colombians are turning to livelihoods in illegal activities that further undermine stability.<sup>23</sup>

President Pastrana's introduction of Plan Colombia immediately following his 1998 election, and his recent concessions to the guerrillas (including setting up a "demilitarized zone" in southern Colombia) have demonstrated GOC willingness to negotiate a settlement, but the conflict continues. Colombia's Human Rights ombudsman reported that 1231 civilians were killed in 194 massacres in 1998, a 16 percent increase over 1996 (96 of the massacres were by paramilitaries, 41 by guerrillas, 8 by the armed services). Since 1985 over 1.5 million people have been displaced from their homes, 300,000 in 1998 alone.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the claims of having the longest history in Latin America of civilian democratic rule, Colombia was never a true liberal democracy until the 1991 Constitution was ratified allowing the president to choose his cabinet and bureaucracy. Colombia has had a history of violence,

exacerbated by keeping the security forces weak so as to pose no threat to the civilian government, and by allowing private groups to fill the law enforcement gap. The violence has been justified in the name of party politics and religious fervor. It has become excused behavior through party coalitions made in spite of partisan violence, and in granting official amnesty to participants in the violence, be they partisans, guerrillas, or drug lords. Many Colombians live uneasily caught between a government that interferes extensively in their lives, limiting personal freedoms and exacting taxes but cannot provide security from lawlessness, and having to cope with justice systems set up by guerrillas, paramilitaries, or drug lords operating outside any rule of law.<sup>25</sup>

The situation is bad, getting worse, and time is running out.

### **Chapter 3: The El Salvador Experience**

**About the first thing one observes when he goes to San Salvador is the number of expensive automobiles on the streets. . . . There appears to be nothing but these high priced cars and the ox cart with its barefooted attendant. There is practically no middle class between the very rich and the very poor. . . . A socialistic or communistic revolution in El Salvador may be delayed for several years, ten or even twenty, but when it comes it will be a bloody one.<sup>26</sup>**

**A. R. Harris, MAJ, Attache to El Salvador, 1931**

United States involvement in El Salvadoran affairs is relatively recent. However, failed U.S. policies during the late 1970s proved devastating to reform efforts within El Salvador and eventually contributed to an exceptionally bloody and violent civil war.

Though the situation did not include the complexity of the influence of drug trafficking as in Colombia, El Salvador has, like Colombia, suffered a long history of political violence with a central government unable or unwilling to adapt to the demands of its people. The U.S. obsession with defeating the spread of communism in the region was a convenient means to ignore a government drowning in its own inefficiency and corruption, a military oppressive of its people and convinced of its supremacy over other agencies and any civilian authority, and an oligarchy bent on maintaining the status quo for their own profit.<sup>27</sup>

The land and the inhabitants of El Salvador, since the advent of the Conquistadors, have lived through one cycle of exploitation after another. Early Spanish colonialists fought hard to subdue the Pipil native inhabitants as laborers and steal their land to grow cash crops, indigo at first and later, when the market collapsed, coffee. In the mid 19th Century the rich landowners, or oligarchy, passed legislation requiring two-thirds of communal lands to be planted in coffee or the land would revert to state control.

By 1882 communal land was abolished altogether, leading to unconstrained acquisition of private property. Indigenous peoples were evicted from ancestral lands, often forcibly. Between

1872 and 1898 there were five uprisings in protest of the policies, but eventually the best land holdings were in the hands of fourteen prominent families whose powerful descendants formed the modern day oligarchy largely responsible for maintaining the system of injustice that eventually precipitated the civil war. The landowners began employing private armies to control the peasants and secure the flow of profits. Power was maintained by setting oligarchy members up as presidents and enforcing compliance with landowner desires. In 1912, President Henriquez Aragon organized the National Guard to supplant the private armies of the landowners, trying to eliminate their excesses in oppressing the peasants. For his efforts he was assassinated by the landowners. The National Guard soon gained a reputation for its own cruelty as a security force.<sup>28</sup>

The oligarchy land policies resulted in no land being available for the peasants to grow food crops; malnutrition became a serious problem. Many heads of households were forced into a nomadic existence looking for work, resulting in the breakdown of family structures and deteriorating living conditions. Though written in January 1929, comments by Salvadoran social critic Alberto Masferrer describe a situation applicable today:

The conquest of territory by the coffee industry is alarming. It has already occupied the high lands and is now descending to the valleys, displacing maize, rice, and beans. It is extended like the *conquistador*, spreading hunger and misery, reducing the former proprietors to the worst conditions . . . It is true that the costs of importing maize are small in relation to the benefits of the export of coffee, but do they give the imported grain to the poor? Or do they make them pay for it? Is the income of the *campesino* who has lost his land, adequate to provide maize, rice, beans, clothes, medicine, doctors, etc.? So, what good does it do to make money from the sale of coffee when it leaves so many people in misery?<sup>29</sup>

By the early 1930s only 10 percent of the population owned land at all, and with the worldwide economic depression, the bottom fell out of the coffee market, living conditions worsened, and a spirit of rebellion fed on the recent revolutions in Russia and Mexico. The year before, Agustin Farabundo Marti, the young, well educated son of a mestizo landowner, was expelled

from El Salvador for radical activities in unifying peasants and workers. He joined with Augusto Cesar Sandino in Nicaragua, who was then trying to expel U.S. Marines from his country. Marti could not convert Sandino from his national independence struggle to a regional social revolution, so Marti returned to El Salvador and continued his efforts as first secretary of the Communist Party. At this same time, President Pio Romero Bosque, handpicked by his predecessor with the assumption he would follow oligarchy orders, broke with tradition and stated no "official" candidate would be designated for the 1930 election.

The election of Arturo Araujo, a liberal landowner, as President in 1931, raised expectations. He hoped to mollify Marti and his followers with higher wages, free public education, and access to clean water and land. The expectations of the poor caused high anxiety among the establishment. To placate the fears, Araujo chose General Hernandez Martinez as his vice-presidential running mate, making a mistake that was to become common among Salvadoran centrists, that of trying to placate the far-right and the far-left. As it became apparent Araujo actually intended to implement reforms, the oligarchy took quick action by refusing to support his government and pulling all government ministry leaders out. The resulting chaos led to a military coup, and General Martinez was quickly installed to succeed the president. Thus began a long line of military rulers in El Salvador.

When the 1931 coup did not result in a favorable situation for the poor, Marti and his followers began plans for simultaneous uprisings in several major Salvadoran towns. The plot was discovered by the authorities several days before execution and Marti and several of his key lieutenants were arrested. Poor communications resulted in the party being unable to call things off and the uncoordinated and disorganized uprisings resulted in disaster. Government response was quick and brutal resulting in *La Matanza* ("The Massacre," over 30,000 dead, only about ten percent of whom were actually participating in the demonstrations). Marti and his lieutenants were tried and executed.<sup>30</sup>

The massacre marked the end of an era, a turning point in Salvadoran history. For the first time civilians had turned over power to the military, and the oligarchy was to now rule by "force of arms" to ensure the socio-economic situation remained unchanged. The situation brought to the forefront two paramount establishment goals: protect oligarchy interests, and preserve the Armed Forces (ESAF) as an institution. The system of *tandas*, or military academy graduating classes, was used for establishing alliances between leading officers to ensure smooth transition of power and sharing of benefits, a system of institutionalized corruption. The oligarchy maintained its grip on the real power through its dominating political party, the National Conciliation Party (PCN), backed by the muscle of the military hierarchy in support of their oligarchy benefactors.

The military takeover touched off a series of political cycles where the new regime:

1. consolidated power (under oligarchy oversight), causing
2. growing intolerance by the opposition which led to
3. increased repression, which resulted in
4. reaction by the public and the officer corps, then to a
5. coup by progressive officers, followed by the promulgation of reforms, which caused the
6. army conservative elite to reemerge and take control again, at which time the cycle repeated.

Between December 1931 and January 1980 there were six such cycles, finally ending when military loyalties to the oligarchy were broken by greater interests in U.S. economic and military aid in preserving the ESAF as an institution.<sup>31</sup>

The issue of the rich putting profitable land into export crops continued unchanged. It appeared good for the country, but most Salvadorans derived little to no benefit from export production or any associated "trickle down" wealth. Elections during the period were characterized by fraud and intimidation, with heavy-handed tactics by the government to suppress any opposition to the "official" candidates. After 1960 the U.S. began slowly increasing its influence over events in El Salvador under the auspices of anti-communism. U.S. policies were not always clear, vacillating

from encouraging democracy to supporting the oligarchy-military power structure in the interests of stability.<sup>32</sup>

During the 1960s a primary U.S. military policy objective was to avoid any more Cubas through the strengthening of state security forces. The U.S. established intelligence gathering capabilities and information sharing systems with the governments in Central America to track and neutralize regional criminal and subversive activities. In El Salvador the U.S. worked with the National Guard and organized the National Democratic Organization (acronym ORDEN in Spanish, which means order) and the Salvadoran National Security Agency (ANSESAL).

ORDEN was originally intended to work with rural communities to indoctrinate the peasants on the advantages of democracy and the pitfalls of communism, to "win the hearts and minds" of the people. Special Forces teams deployed from Panama helped set things up and trained a team of Salvadoran officers (including Major Roberto D'Aubuisson who will be discussed later). General Jose Alberto Medrano, head of the National Guard project, considered any peasant "deceived" by the guerrillas as dangerous to the state, and established a network to report names of such "communists" to ORDEN and ANSESAL for "appropriate action" by higher authority. Action taken was usually murder by either ORDEN members themselves, by the National Guard, or by a "death squad" known as "Mano Blanca" (White Hand) and composed of members of ORDEN who had made the original reports.<sup>33</sup>

The situation in 1969 became untenable. World coffee prices dropped, disease ravaged the cotton crop, sugarcane surpluses increased as world demand decreased, foreign investment decreased as international deficits increased, public works and welfare projects had to be curtailed. The rising ranks of unemployed who took to the streets and were joined in protest by the labor unions. On top of it all, Honduras closed its borders to Salvadoran immigration in protest of trade imbalances and illegal settlements in disputed border areas. The government attempted to distract public attention



from their economic woes with a four day invasion of Honduras in July, 1969, but only made matters worse by spending about one fifth the annual national budget on the war, isolating Salvadoran markets in the process, and having to absorb thousands more homeless, jobless citizens. Progressive PCN and opposition delegates within the National Assembly began work on agrarian reforms to try to solve the growing demands for land. They cited the possession of so much land in the hands of so few as a barrier to full employment and development of national resources, and that government forces should support rather than suppress the peasants' right to be heard.<sup>34</sup>

The presidential campaign of 1972 brought things to a head. The combination of government-directed violence against the opposition candidate (Jose Napoleon Duarte), the questionable handling of ballot counts, and the nullification of an electoral board decision led to a coup by a group of young Army officers. The coup was put down by National Guard and Air Force elements loyal to the government, another demonstration of official encouragement of an active opposition but denial of any real chance of the opposition coming to power. Only diplomatic corps protests saved the coup leaders from execution, and Duarte went into exile. Repression of student activism by newly inaugurated president Arturo Molina, under the auspices of "anticommunism," served to increase radicalism among the young and to reinforce skepticism his regime would implement meaningful change.<sup>35</sup>

In 1975 the government hosted the Miss Universe pageant, spending \$30 million in the process. Student protests at the expenditures, in light of the massive social needs, were put down forcibly by National Guard troops. In San Salvador, some two thousand protesters gathered in Plaza Libertad were surrounded and fired upon, leaving 37 dead and several dozen missing. Later the same year a right wing extremist organization, the Anti-communist Wars of Elimination Liberation Armed Forces, or FALANGE, was formed with a public commitment to exterminate communists and their sympathizers in El Salvador. They were joined by several other groups all of whom had 4 things in

common:

- all were connected with certain Army officers
- membership consisted of off-duty National Guard and National Police, supplemented with ORDEN and right-wing members of the oligarchy
- all received funding from various oligarchy members
- all shared the generic name of "Death Squads"<sup>36</sup>

The history of election fraud continued unabated in the 1974 Assembly and mayoral elections, and in 1976 the opposition deliberately abstained from participation in protest of the ongoing fraudulent and repressive activities of the government. The opposition decided to reenter the fray in the presidential election of 1977. Blatant actions by the official party of the oligarchy, the Christian Democratic Party or PDC, to stuff ballot boxes and impede voting through violence resulted in the opposition denouncing the elections as stolen. After three days of strikes and protests, a crowd of some 50,000 gathered in Plaza Libertad, San Salvador. The gathering was surrounded by National Guard troops who then fired into the crowd killing at least 48. The opposition candidate was sent into exile, and Molinas' chosen successor, Carlos Humberto Romero, was inaugurated.

Romero was immediately faced with spiraling mass demonstrations, coupled with rising left-wing kidnappings and labor strikes. The pattern completed itself with increased government repression and rising right-wing death squad murders. The U.S., under President Jimmy Carter, began stressing the importance of human rights and linked future aid to progress in that area. But mixed signals were sent when, on the one hand, U.S. Military Group personnel were decreased to show dissatisfaction with human rights progress, while on the other the vocally pro-human rights ambassador (Lozano) was replaced with one who questioned U.S. title to dictate such policy to another sovereign nation (Devine). Romero got the Assembly to pass legislation which basically gave the military free reign in arresting anyone suspected of subversion or criminal activity. Disappearances doubled and political assassinations increased ten fold.<sup>37</sup>

Several significant events occurred in 1979 that brought things to a crisis. In May the

Municipal Cathedral and several embassies were occupied by protesters demanding the government release several of their leaders. When several hundred demonstrators joined in a week later in front of the Cathedral, the National Guard opened fire on the crowd killing 22. That same month the Romero regime invited the leading oligarchy members to a meeting and were told they would have to take care of themselves because the government could no longer do it. This was the first crack in the military-oligarchy coalition that had endured 47 years. The more reactionary members of the oligarchy immediately formed their own death squads and eventually created their own political party. In July the Sandinista movement in Nicaragua successfully ousted Somoza. The Salvadoran military saw many members of the collapsed Nicaraguan National Guard fleeing through El Salvador having lost home and country. The ESAF did not want to share the Nicaraguan fate.

The situation resulted in the first coup in which civilians actively participated. While the military planned the coup, the civilians looked ahead to the issues of governing, installing necessary reforms, and solving the nation's woes. As barracks began to revolt in October 1979, the majority of the Army supported reforms outlined in a "Proclamation" of the ESAF. Romero was sent into exile and a governing Junta was formed. But a senior officer, COL Muricio Gutierrez Castro, who did not share the coup leaders political and economic views, found out about the plot, got himself included, and worked to undermine the plan. He succeeded in getting his reactionary cronies into key governmental positions. The Junta abolished the hated ANSESAL, but Gutierrez' associate and deputy director of ANSESAL, MAJ Roberto D'Aubuisson, removed the intelligence files to Army headquarters, made personal copies for his own use later, and simply reorganized and renamed the network. A couple months later, D'Aubuisson resigned his commission and formed his own right-wing political-military organization in support of the ESAF high command ideology. The Junta failed to bring the security forces under control, and more Salvadorans died in the three weeks following the coup than any other similar period during the Romero regime.<sup>38</sup>

The Sandinista victory in Nicaragua, along with the Soviet invasion of Afganistan, caused a reevaluation of U.S. interests in Central America, and brought urgency to resolving the situation in El Salvador and preventing "another Nicaragua." However, the U.S. presented contradictory policies to the government of El Salvador (GOES), saying it supported the government and its proposed reforms, but taking positions to ensure order rather than reform, to build a political center through elimination of left and right extremes. The U.S. neglected the fact that important sectors of the military were linked to the right, that they would never move against it, and that the military and the right, mostly out of fear, were convinced the only way to deal with the left was to eliminate it through violence.<sup>39</sup>

President Carter, relieved to see Romero gone, offered aid and support to the Junta that was intended to support and encourage respect for human rights and help implement the social, political, and economic reforms outlined in the Proclamation, but the results proved very different. Though the human rights policy was still in effect, it was not pursued actively or effectively. With growing leftist agitation, U.S. policy encouraged a "law and order" line for the ESAF. However, the U.S. view of law and order included a functioning legal system and a well trained and disciplined police force, neither of which existed in El Salvador at the time. The U.S. embassy also actively supported the business community. To the disenfranchised, U.S. policies supported "law and order" coupled with the private enterprise of the oligarchy. This position fell directly in line with the interests of the most conservative elements of Salvadoran society, encouraged the most conservative elements in the security forces, and effectively maintained the status quo. By January 1980 the civilian Junta members had resigned in protest of the continued repression by government security forces and military intransigence on reforms, seemingly fueled by U.S. aid.<sup>40</sup>

When President Carter announced in 1980 a \$5.7 million military aid package, he received from Archbishop Romero y Galdamez a letter requesting suspension of the aid, appealing to Carter as

a Christian and defender of human rights saying the aid would:

instead of promoting greater justice and peace in El Salvador will surely increase injustice here and sharpen the repression that has been unleashed against the people's organizations. . . . Neither the junta nor the Christian Democrats govern the country. Political power is in the hands of the armed forces [who] use their power unscrupulously. They know only how to repress the people and defend the interests of the Salvadoran oligarchy.<sup>41</sup>

Carter had Secretary of State Vance answer the letter. The aid continued.

The violence continued as evidence mounted that Salvadoran self-exiled millionaires in the U.S. were financing right-wing death squads, with D'Aubuisson as their agent directing and organizing the effort. D'Aubuisson used his old ANSESAL files to identify "terrorist conspirators", even threatening priests and civil leaders on television, including Archbishop Oscar Romero and ex-Junta leader Mario Zamora; Zamora was killed the day after D'Aubuisson's public threat, the Archbishop three weeks later. Many of those with files were soon dead, many more fled the country. GOES security forces waged an ongoing rural "pacification" campaign, and in June 1980 ESAF elements rampaged the University of El Salvador killing 22, destroying the library and its rare book collection, and stealing office furniture and machinery. Further repressions of the university included killing the Rector and another 80 students, faculty and staff, and jailing some 42 others while forcing more into exile.<sup>42</sup>

The country was facing economic collapse from continued efforts by both left and right to paralyze or destroy the economy with strikes, interruption of harvests, business closures, and the flight of capital in the face of such instability. Unemployment soared. Only continued assistance from the U.S. and other nations kept the government from bankruptcy. Non-lethal military aid was cut in response to the December, 1980, murders of four U.S. churchwomen, but was restored within two weeks due to the imminent collapse of the country now financing a civil war.<sup>43</sup>

The newly elected President Ronald Reagan announced a three point policy toward Central

America:

1. Overthrow the revolutionary government in Nicaragua
2. Establish a permanent base in Honduras
3. Militarily defeat the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN, the leftist movement in El Salvador)

The situation in El Salvador had now become a regional issue, threatening the stability of all Central America, the Panama Canal, and even Mexico. Secretary of State Haig held the view, shared by many administration officials, that the GOES included military officers and civilians representing every political element of the country except the far-right and far-left, and that survival of the present government would surely lead to free and open elections and the solution to the problem. In a letter to Vice President Bush, the senior Catholic bishop, Arturo Rivera Damas, tried to help the new administration understand the true situation, saying:

. . . you underestimate the power and resistance of the right-wing military to true political change, including the kind of political dialogue which I am sure is the only road to peace in our country. . . . The United States must clearly indicate it is in favor of a political solution through negotiations or [they] will not occur.

But the Reagan administration was not interested in a negotiated political solution, rather in defeating communism in the region.<sup>44</sup>

Policy now included professionalizing the military as a means to stop the excesses and win over popular support. General Woerner, former Command-in-Chief, U.S. Southern Command, published a report outlining the professionalization strategy, keying in on three elements:

1. The Officer Corps must subordinate itself to civilian rule
2. The ESAF must respect human rights
3. The ESAF must internalize the processes necessary to nurture talent, reward success, weed out incompetents, and become operationally effective

In practice it was to be seen that the ESAF high command was more intent on maintaining its power base within the military as an institution than in any success against the insurgency.<sup>45</sup>

The Reagan administration rebuffed repeated declarations by the FMLN guerrilla movement

that they were willing to negotiate an end to the violence. The U.S. decided, rather, to press elections in an effort to legitimize a government with Duarte as president. The election was not a Salvadoran initiative and was held in the midst of a civil war. Fair and open elections would normally include freedom of speech, freedom of the media, freedom of organization for intermediate groups, the absence of state-sponsored terror, freedom of party organization and the ability to field candidates, and the absence of fear and coercion among the population. None of these conditions existed in El Salvador in 1982. It appeared to many that U.S. policy was more interested in short term appearances of progress than in any real progress, whatever it took to keep Congressional funding flowing. The U.S. continued to stress military and economic aid over employing any political means to negotiate an end to the conflict.<sup>46</sup>

D'Aubuisson and the extreme right had formed their own political party, the National Republican Alliance or ARENA, and were pressing their agenda to remove the PDC from power. Though the U.S. finally succeeded in helping Duarte and the PDC gain the presidency in 1984 (the first civilian elected president since 1931), real power remained with the military, the oligarchy, and the U.S. government. Disunity within the Assembly led to political fights which fed the insurgency. ARENA was committed to dismantling any agrarian reforms and stifling any economic improvements, which led to continued deterioration of the economy. With the GOES now legitimated in the eyes of the U.S., attentions turned on both sides of the conflict to the real key to victory, the support of the people.<sup>47</sup>

As the war raged on, neither side could defeat the other, and neither side could win. Colonel Lyman C. Duryea, Defense Attache from 1983 to 1985, characterized the situation:

So we've nearly arrived at a point [in 1986] where additional infusions of training, material, and various other elements of security assistance won't move us toward the ultimate goal of defeating the insurgency but will merely reinforce the stalemate. . . . The guerrillas have had to change the way they operate. . . . But they can continue in that mode literally forever, and we have not yet developed a strategy nor a policy with a proper objective.<sup>48</sup>

In January, 1989, just in time to derail preparations for the presidential elections, the FMLN proposed their participation in and honoring of the election in exchange for a 6 month delay in the elections, for keeping the military in their barracks on election day, for allowing absentee voting for Salvadorans abroad, and for allowing a member of the opposition on the Central Election Committee. The initiative led to talks in Mexico where the FMLN agreed to renounce armed struggle, enter the political process, and recognize a single army in El Salvador if the GOES would agree to certain military reforms. ARENA, sensing victory in the upcoming elections, refused to cooperate and rejected the offer. The FMLN increased the pressure on election day by causing a blackout in San Salvador and 80-percent of the rest of the country, by orchestrating a largely successful national 4-day transportation stoppage, and by not attacking any voting places.

Corruption within the PDC nearly guaranteed ARENA victory, and their candidate, Alfredo Christiani, won on the first round. His inauguration harkened back to 1931, when the last oligarch in power was ousted in a coup. To the surprise of many, Christiani immediately called for peace talks with the FMLN. He realized he could not fix the economy with a war going on and that ARENA could lose big in the upcoming Assembly and mayoral elections if there was no progress. Also, by this time other Latin America leaders were calling for a negotiated solution, the Soviet Union was no longer able to finance FMLN activities, and Salvadoran public opinion overwhelmingly favored a negotiated settlement.

The Sandinista loss in the 1990 elections in Nicaragua helped reinforce pragmatism in the FMLN leadership. The FMLN realized any military victory would bring international isolation to their country, that many nations had pledged funding for reconstruction once a peace accord was reached, and Soviet-style socialism was an obvious failure.<sup>49</sup>

In September, 1989, FMLN and GOES representatives met in Mexico and established



procedures for negotiations with representatives from the U.N. and the Organization of American States (OAS) as witnesses. The talks continued until several bombings persuaded the FMLN that the GOES was not serious about the negotiations. President Christiani promised to investigate, but nothing happened, and the FMLN "refused to lay down arms in the face of state terrorism." In November 1989 the FMLN launched a nation-wide offensive that brought the war home to many of the powerful, especially in San Salvador. The U.S. Embassy and the GOES had believed their own assessments of the demise of the FMLN, but the offensive and the weak response showed:

1. The failure of the U.S. and GOES intelligence systems
2. The FMLN could set the terms of combat and expose the weaknesses of the ESAF
3. "Professionalization" had not worked (as seen in the ESAF retaliation murders of 6 Jesuit priests and 2 women)<sup>50</sup>

The 1989 murders of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter at the University of Central America (UCA) caused immediate reaction in the U.S. Congress quickly began debate on aid to El Salvador, a subject that had not been questioned in years. The logic was that if Christiani had no control over his security forces, then the Bush administration was being either less than forthcoming in claiming to be supporting a legitimate government in El Salvador, or being party to murderous military activities. Aid was cut in half, with aid allocated being dependent on progress in solving the Jesuit murders and in peace talk negotiations. In early 1990, at the request of both sides, the U.N. assisted in bringing the two sides together in Geneva to begin negotiations and actively participated in helping resolve difficulties. FMLN operations continued in El Salvador as military intransigence persisted.<sup>51</sup>

In July, 1991, the U.N. Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) was established to monitor compliance with agreements reached by the two parties. As the right-wing realized a cease-fire was in sight, threats were launched against ONUSAL, and death squad threats and murders increased. In August the U.N. Secretary General, Perez de Cuellar, invited Christiani and top

representatives from both sides of the conflict to New York for talks. Pressure from the international community mounted, particularly from the nations calling themselves the "Four Friends," Spain, Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela. The FMLN agreed to relinquish its demand to incorporate into the Army in exchange for two things: 1) the chance to participate in the formation of the new National Civil Police (PNC), which was to become the sole public security force, and 2) to have a representative on the Commission for the Consolidation of Peace (COPAZ), giving them a voice in the implementation of political accords.

Negotiations intensified in December, and at the end of the month Christiani was summoned to New York to make final GOES decisions. The accords were signed 31 December, 1991, as Secretary Perez' term expired. The accords addressed the following:

1. Reduction of the ESAF
2. ESAF mission restricted to territorial security
3. Revision of military officer education
4. Purification of human rights abusers from the Officer Corps
5. Abolishment of the three security forces and replacement with a National Civil Police independent of the ESAF
6. Reform of the judicial and electoral systems
7. Resolution of the economic and social issues that caused the war including land distribution to the landless and ex-combatants of both sides, establishment of an independent human rights commission, and establishment of a National Reconstruction Plan to provide for physical reconstruction of schools, roads, clinics, housing, etc.

The formal signing of the peace accords was held January 16, 1992 in Mexico City. At the February 1st ceremony to install the COPAZ, FMLN leaders who had not been seen in public for twelve years stood openly with citizens who had supported the movement covertly to the surprise and shock of many.<sup>52</sup>

The Chapultepec Peace Accords, so named for one of the negotiation locales, marked the first time ever a civil war had been brought to an end with an accord to not only end the shooting but also to restructure a society. There have been many problems with implementation of the accords,

some serious, but it is the first time there have been no cease-fire violations and all issues have been resolved peacefully. The negotiated settlement led directly to the end of the conflict, has instilled respect for human rights, has started the reunification of Salvadoran society, and has promoted democratization through legalizing the FMLN party.

There are many lessons to be taken from the experience in El Salvador. Socioeconomic power held by a small group of elites results in decisions being made for personal or group gain, to consolidate and maintain power, and not for the good of the nation or society. A situation where wealth and capital are overly concentrated in the hands of a few will likely result in an economy that cannot sustain internal growth, where the work force, the land, and capital become underutilized. The U.S. has become obsessed with the idea that free elections are the panacea for establishing democracy, but elections, though admittedly an essential element in the complex and often difficult process, do not equate to democracy. Democracy only works when everybody wins something, when everyone has hope in improving his situation. Political parties must keep in touch with their people and help educate the populace to make the right choices for the good of the country and exercise their right to have their voice heard. Opposition groups must broaden their base of support and be flexible enough to form coalitions so that all can have a reasonable chance to effect appropriate change within the system. Finally, cessation of hostilities does not bring an end to difficulties; peace accords are not self-executing and require considerable political will to accomplish.

The success of El Salvador is owed mainly to the overriding desire of the majority of its people, on both sides of the conflict, for national reconciliation. It is true that high levels of civil violence remain, and that genuine reconciliation and a coherent economic policy remain elusive, but the resolve for progress and the means to achieve it are now available.

#### **Chapter 4: President Pastrana's Plan Colombia**

The current armed conflict in Colombia has waged on for more than 35 years. The peace process is a top national priority. President Pastrana has assumed personal leadership of the government's role and appointed a High Commissioner for Peace. On 20 September 1999, President Pastrana presented his plan to restore peace and stability in Colombia to the opening session of the United Nations General Assembly. In his introductory remarks, he states:

. . . this General Assembly now opens its last session of the 20th century . . . where . . . two world conflagrations permitted the nations of the world to come to the collective realization that all wars are civil wars--all killing is fratricidal--and any small clash of arms could, through escalation or incident, spark mankind's final war. It was then clear that to survive, to prosper, nations had to unite on the fundamentals of preventing war, protecting human rights and setting as a first priority the preservation of the human future on this planet. . . . The quest for peace [in Colombia] is not limited to dialogues and negotiations, or to putting an end to armed confrontation. . . . It requires a social and state construction process that puts an end to the factors of the conflict, allowing the state to create the foundations of a stable and lasting peace.<sup>53</sup>

To meet the challenges facing Colombia, President Pastrana describes a group of strategies to reconstruct the society of Colombia and achieve peace, economic prosperity, and the strengthening of the state, which he calls Plan Colombia. He emphasizes the vital importance of obtaining the solidarity and contributions of the international community in successfully implementing the plan.

Plan Colombia is an attempt at a comprehensive, broad spectrum resolution of the sources of instability in Colombia. It is part of a grand alliance against drug trafficking, corruption, and the violation of human rights. It is intended to restore the state as the single entity responsible for the public interest, to regain the confidence of the citizens of Colombia and restore

1. the basic norms of peaceful coexistence. It requires complimentary support in the fields of security and defense, as well as a partnership against drug production and consumption and a development plan to create jobs and reach those most in need. It includes the following strategies:

2. Economic--generate employment, bolster the state's ability to collect taxes, provide for a viable "counterbalancing economic force" to narco-trafficking
3. Fiscal and Financial--austerity and adjustment measures to boost economic activity and reestablish Colombia's prestige in the international marketplace
4. Military--restructure and modernize the armed forces and police so they can reestablish the rule of law, provide security throughout the country, and combat organized crime and armed groups
5. Judicial and Human Rights--ensure equal and impartial justice, continue reforms in the security forces to ensure their proper role in defending and respecting the rights and dignity of all Colombians
6. Counterdrug--in partnership with other producer and consumer nations, combat the production and consumption of illegal drugs, and break up the flow of illicit profits to insurgent and other armed organizations
7. Alternative Development--promote agricultural and other profitable economic activity for small rural farmers and families, consider feasible environmental protection activities, stop the expansion of illegal cultivation
8. Social Participation--make local governments more accountable and get communities involved in anti-corruption efforts and pressuring illegal groups to end the violence and displacement of citizens; work with local business and labor groups to adopt new and more productive methods; strengthen the agricultural communities
9. Human Development--work to guarantee within five years adequate education and health services and help to the more vulnerable groups like displaced citizens and those in extreme poverty
10. Peace--obtain a negotiated peace agreement with the insurgency which will strengthen the rule of law and the fight against drugs<sup>54</sup>

Plan Colombia seeks to restore confidence and establish a basis for sustained growth by stabilizing the economy and returning to fiscal balance. Renewed confidence, along with improvements in the security situation, stable government finances, a healthy banking system, increased Colombian exports, and improvements in the investment climate will create an environment where private sector growth will generate employment. Though the plan includes much in the way of internal actions (cut public spending, control tax evasion, freeze civil servant salaries and cut the bureaucracy, etc.), success will require outside financial assistance to effect economic reforms while simultaneously financing counter-insurgent efforts, addressing pressing social needs, and modernizing the industrial sector to speed reduction of unemployment. The government will then be able to lay the foundation for economic growth in the private sector while ensuring the

current situation does not generate additional employment in illegal economic activities.

The enormous profits from drug trafficking have largely been laundered through contraband imports into Colombia, damaging state tax revenues and employment in legitimate competing businesses. The opening of the Colombian economy in the last decade negatively impacted the agricultural sector, which proved noncompetitive in world markets, and resulted in the loss of many rural farming jobs to cheaper imports, with the ranks of the rural-based insurgents benefiting from the unemployment. The plan includes opening room for alternatives not only to illegal crops but also to crops which respond to the challenges of a modern agricultural sector.

Plan Colombia includes a ten-year strategic plan for expanding trade, vital to economic development and to counterbalancing the effects of the drug economy. Actions planned include compliance with the Uruguay Round agreements, promotion of a favorable environment for electronic commerce, and completion this year of an agreement on transparency in government procurement with the World Trade Organization (WTO) to ensure greater efficiency in the use of government funds. The Plan also seeks expanded access to the markets of its major trading partners, including the U.S. where preferential market access is vital to the economic development needed to encourage private sector initiatives and counterbalance drug trafficking.

Undergirding the drive to win the confidence of the people, the Plan calls for concerted efforts to ensure the Ministry of Defense (military forces, national police), and the Department of Administrative Security (DAS) protect democracy and human rights as their primary responsibilities. Defense will also increase the employment of combined (military/police) operations and intelligence; increase troop strength, mobility and night-fighting capabilities; implement a campaign aimed at encouraging members of armed groups to desert and reintegrate into society; gain control of Colombian air space; and better control the importation of precursor chemicals and ground movement/export of drugs.

The Ministry of Interior and the Governors and Mayors will issue decrees and resolutions necessary to restrict the traffic and movement of people, weapons and legal materials used in the processing of illegal drugs as requested by the military or police commanders. The goal is to eliminate large-scale drug production, end large-scale violence and lawlessness by organized armed groups, promote respect for human rights, and break the link between armed groups and their drug industry support.

The Plan outlines actions to strengthen all aspects of the judicial system and commit Colombia to the rule of law. Judicial reforms proposed in the Plan intend to restore public confidence by building a fair and effective justice system that is transparent, accessible and independent. Colombia plans to investigate, prosecute, and securely incarcerate drug traffickers so they cannot continue their crimes from jail; extradite international criminals as called for by law; and effectively protect witnesses and judicial officials. Criminals will be deprived of illegally obtained resources which will then be used to support law enforcement and social initiatives (e.g. land reform, alternative development, strengthening civil institutions) critical to a lasting peace. The Plan includes efforts to fight corruption and ensure violators are subject to legal action.

In the area of human rights, the Plan calls for a total commitment to the protection and realization of those fundamental rights as outlined in the numerous multilateral treaties and pacts to which Colombia is a signatory. The government will use the media to spread a deeper understanding of human rights to the people, as well as train journalists and members of the government. A strategy to fight against impunity will push for investigations and sanctions regarding the most severe cases of human rights abuse, while protecting those who work in defense of human rights.

The Plan outlines a three-phase, six-year strategy for a 50 percent reduction in the cultivation, processing and distribution of illegal drugs. It describes an integrated fight against this major contributor to the violence and high crime in Colombia, and establishes, in President

Pastrana's words, "a real alliance between the countries consuming and producing illegal drugs under the principle of joint responsibility, reciprocity and fairness."<sup>55</sup> The Plan Colombia drug strategy has the following objectives:

1. Strengthen the fight against drug trafficking and dismantle the trafficking organizations through an integrated effort by the armed forces (combat illicit cultivation, strengthen eradication capabilities, destroy processing facilities, improve interdiction of drugs and precursor chemicals)
2. Strengthen the justice system and combat corruption (strengthen prosecutor's office, courts, public defenders; train police investigators; reform prison/jail system; enforce extradition laws; etc.)
3. Neutralize the drug trade's financial system and seize its assets for the state (asset seizure program, freeze bank accounts and assets outside the country, strengthen counter-smuggling efforts)
4. Neutralize and combat the agents of violence allied with the drug trade (increase citizen security, halt acquisition of arms)
5. Integrate national initiatives into regional and international efforts (share intelligence, coordinate with/contribute to outside efforts)
6. Strengthen and expand plans for alternative development in the areas affected by drug trafficking (job opportunities and social services, information campaigns on dangers of illegal drugs)<sup>56</sup>

The small farmers growing illicit crops in the poppy-producing areas, and about one third of the coca area, have generally ready access to licit markets. The alternative development strategy for them will be to encourage abandonment of illicit production in return for assistance in establishing profitable licit crops, provision of education and health services, improved municipal infrastructure and public security, and help in setting up links with local and urban markets. For the estimated 60 percent of coca-producing areas far from licit markets, alternative development centers of three possible responses:

1. Farmers will be offered the chance to move and resettle on land seized from traffickers or provided by the Land Reform Institute (INCORA)
2. Migrant coca farmers could receive small/micro enterprise opportunities in their urban areas of origin to remove the incentive for migration
3. Government will work with indigenous groups and local governments to launch economically feasible environmental protection activities to slow the advance of agriculture into inappropriate areas<sup>57</sup>



Between 1974 and 1998 the armed conflict and the expansion of agriculture, most notably illegal crops, has destroyed an estimated one million hectares of forest, including a high percentage of conservation areas and national parklands. This serious threat to the Amazon delta ecosystem has global implications since, as noted in the Convention of Climactic Change, the Amazon forest is vital to the absorption of global carbon dioxide.

To resolve the plight of the many displaced Colombians, the Plan first calls for removing the causes that lead to displacement by improving security in the areas most affected and establishing an early warning and rapid response capability to avert/deter the violence. The government will promote, where feasible, the establishment of "Peace Communities" where displaced persons can go to receive minimum standard emergency humanitarian assistance (water, hygiene, health, nutrition, shelter), with special attention to different children, women and ethnic minorities.

Finally, Plan Colombia notes that the citizens of Colombia, as well as all levels of government, play a critical role in effecting the national program and in helping fulfill expectations. The GOC will work through the bureaucracy and non-governmental organizations to provide the municipal governments with the technical abilities to manage funds and programs aimed at displaced persons, alternative development and the alleviation of poverty. The municipal governments will also be trained to promote public participation in the decision-making process and in resolving social and economic problems so that the people can set their needs in priority, design and implement the services they need, and effectively use their resources. The GOC will invite international organizations to participate at the municipal level to help mobilize additional resources as well as establish a means of independent verification of the local situation.

## **Chapter 5: Comparison and Analysis**

Though the situation faced by El Salvador and the current crisis in Colombia differ significantly, this cursory review finds enough similarities to offer some comparisons and the hope that a success similar to that in El Salvador can be achieved in Colombia under President Pastrana's Plan Colombia. The advantages to reaching a successful peace accord like that achieved in El Salvador have not escaped the attention of both the GOC and the insurgents.

The key to success in El Salvador lay in the realization by both the government and the insurgents that neither side could win the war and that a negotiated settlement was in the best interests of both parties. It is apparent that the GOC has also come to that realization, as have the various insurgent groups, and that prolonging the conflict brings substantial costs and risks to all except those involved in criminal activities. But whereas the FMLN lost most of its support following the demise of the Soviet Union and the Sandinistas, the insurgents in Colombia have found a virtually limitless source of revenue in the drug trade. Leverage for the GOC at the negotiating table will be heavily dependent on the breakdown of drug revenues and on a credible showing of military combat capability against insurgent and paramilitary forces. The GOC can also leverage the increasingly heavy price insurgents are paying from growing paramilitary operations. The rebels might be willing to come to terms if, as was done in El Salvador, some of their economic, social and political demands are addressed.<sup>58</sup>

As always, there is danger in propping up the situation with a lot of aid, which is the typical U.S. response. Stalemate is a very acceptable situation for corrupt officials, black marketeers, drug traffickers and all the other elements who profit from disorder. Aid and pressure for negotiations must be employed in such a manner so as to resolve the problem, not bolster the current system just enough to preserve all its worst characteristics.<sup>59</sup>

U.S. policies and actions must be focused, coordinated and timely. By delaying assignment

of an ambassador to El Salvador from February, 1992 until October, 1993, U.S. policymakers failed to provide the means to ensure compliance with the admittedly ambiguous peace accord provisions. In spite of wanting to bring a quick and lasting peace to El Salvador, U.S. actions encouraged the GOES to stall any serious reforms. By failing to quickly respond to President Pastrana's request for assistance with Plan Colombia, the U.S. helped send Pastrana's popular support plummeting and further delayed meaningful action toward lasting peace.<sup>60</sup>

As forcefully demonstrated in the El Salvador peace process, the role of the international community is vital to success, so long as it is acceptable to the host nation and conforms with international law. The efforts of the Four Friends governments and the ONUSAL were vital to success. The ONUSAL mission was the first time the U.N. had been asked to help resolve an internal conflict, and it was the first U.N. mission to include a division for human rights and one for police. The powers ceded to the U.N. monitors were unprecedented in peacekeeping operations, providing for free and open interviews and visits without notice and the ability to take whatever legal was deemed appropriate to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. Another first was that it opened operations, at the request of both sides, before the accords were even signed.<sup>61</sup>

Of critical importance to the situation in Colombia is for the international community to endorse the program set forth by the GOC, thereby bolstering confidence in the establishment. Success of the Plan relies heavily on the international community providing both financial and diplomatic support, rejecting any and all terrorist actions and violations of human rights, and maintaining pressure to keep the peace process moving. The international community, including the U.S., must not allow the insurgents to undermine confidence in the GOC with their manipulations of the peace process, but instead endorse Colombian self-determination and provide real pressure to resolve the issues. As primary drug consumers, the developed nations are arguably in large part responsible for the extent of the disaster in Colombia. These nations need to get control of their

demand for drugs and help shoulder the burden of resolving the conflict in Colombia by determining how they can support and finance Plan Colombia.<sup>62</sup>

Colombia must remain a focus of efforts, but not at the expense of regional and inter-regional approaches to lasting peace and stability which could nullify successes achieved in neighboring countries. Unlike El Salvador, where the fight began as anticommunist and ended up as the reformation of a democratic society, there is a very real possibility of Colombia becoming a full fledged "narcostate" or, more likely, undergoing a "balkanization" by breaking up into areas controlled by insurgents, drug lords, and paramilitary regimes and based on drug economies. The insurgents and paramilitaries threaten the state by usurping control over portions of the country and by disrupting order through raids, kidnappings, roadblocks and terrorist acts. Drug cultivation and processing is conducted largely in remote areas beyond the reach of limited government assets, especially in southern Colombia where there is strong guerrilla presence. As long as this independent source of drugs and revenue remains beyond government enforcement capabilities, the insurgent, the paramilitary, and the narcotrafficker threat to the state will increase. Considering the fact that Venezuela is the number one supplier of foreign oil to the U.S., and that Panama (with its important canal) is already experiencing insurgent incursions, failure in Colombia could lead to deeper U.S. involvement than ever imagined.<sup>63</sup>

However, in spite of the U.S. aversion to participate (as experienced by El Salvador), some progress has been made in the Colombia peace negotiations. The insurgents have agreed to a negotiated settlement, to a broad agenda for the negotiations, and to the participation of the international community. The FARC was granted a "demilitarized" zone as a precondition for opening negotiations, though the insurgents have since stalled talks by not agreeing to the composition of the observer commission, an action which led many to doubt insurgent sincerity about negotiations while having such a vested interest in the profitable war situation. The GOC has

also sent mediators to negotiate the release of ELN hostages. Once the hostages are released, peace dialog can proceed. And last summer the chairman of the New York Stock Exchange visited rebel leaders in their jungle headquarters in an effort to educate them about the modern world, a world of which many of them have heard little in some 50 years of fighting.

Most recently, a delegation of representatives from the GOC and the FARC have been touring Europe, exposing the guerrilla leaders not only to social democracy but also to much criticism of their involvement in drug trafficking, kidnappings and human rights violations. The message is that if the insurgents expect Europe to view their political goals as legitimate, as was crucial to the FMLN cause in the El Salvador accords, the guerrillas had better change their behavior. Some experts are detecting slight changes in guerrilla positions toward cease-fire and toward the GOC, suggesting ties being developed in the group could lead to international mediation of the conflict. U.N. Secretary Annan appointed Jan Egeland as special advisor for the conflict, with Colombians welcoming the move because of the crucial role Norway played in peace negotiations with Israel and Palestine as well as Guatemala and the insurgency there.<sup>64</sup>

Secret meetings in early March 2000 between Egeland and FARC leader Marulanda indicated the GOC and the guerrilla group are willing to start eradication projects. Egeland has indicated he expects an agreement on infrastructure work in long neglected rural areas, first steps toward ending one of the worlds most intractable wars. The FARC leader has also voiced conviction of GOC sincerity in negotiating an end to the war.<sup>65</sup>

The GOC continues to fight the paramilitaries as illegal armed bands threatening the stability of the state. The paramilitaries have transformed what was once a two-sided insurgency into a multipolar war of many actors, weakening all the combatants in the process. The GOC remains open to alternative peaceful ways to dismantle their infrastructure and operations as the peace process advances, but experience has shown that settlement will require external mediation and monitoring.

Much of the support for paramilitary activity and continuing human rights abuses in El Salvador had to be forcefully removed from government and military through independent commissions under international observers. Plan Colombia identifies the need to revamp human rights attitudes, especially in the armed forces. As learned in El Salvador, success depends heavily on international participation in monitoring progress and ensuring compliance.<sup>66</sup>

Though El Salvador did not have to struggle with a drug trafficking issue, Plan Colombia contends that the best way to resolve the problems of the production and trafficking of drugs, and bring alternative development programs to those areas most affected, is through the peace process. The insurgents and the traffickers, though linked, have very different origins and objectives. The guerrillas operate under a revolutionary political-military code that demands a negotiated settlement, while the drug traffickers are an illegal business primarily seeking profit. The Plan attempts to separate the two groups, resolve the insurgency through negotiation and installing legitimate socioeconomic change, and then deal with the traffickers as enemies of all legitimate global societies.

One of the critical lessons learned in El Salvador was that human rights abuses destroy the legitimacy of the government and drive uncommitted parties into the camp of the insurgents. Critics of U.S. policy in Colombia accuse the U.S. of repeating a pattern of supporting official violence as it did when it backed the ESAF during the 1980s. Colombian human rights advocates have spoken out in Washington against any military assistance charging that, as did Archbishop Romero in El Salvador, the aid supports the committing of atrocities against the population by the military and, by implication in Colombia, by the paramilitaries as well. The experience in El Salvador also taught that a critical element to lasting peace is improved law enforcement and judicial reform and training, to ensure citizen confidence in security forces and non-support for extra-judicial enforcement or punishment. Plan Colombia reflects strongly these lessons learned, and there has in fact been marked progress within the Colombian military in this area, with President Pastrana already having forced

some suspect generals into retirement.<sup>67</sup>

Another key to the success in El Salvador was the ability of the body politic to make room for the FMLN party as quickly as it did. The GOC must provide the political and security climate that will allow and attract the guerrillas and paramilitaries to enter the political arena as legitimate entities.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations**

In our own backyard, Colombia is wracked by three simultaneous wars threatening the entire region with the undermining of democracy, political stability and regional security, and with the acceleration of illegal immigration to the U.S. A comprehensive, visionary approach is desperately needed to return Colombia as a contributor to hemispheric prosperity and to forestall its potential "balkanization," a situation which could potentially spread unabated throughout the region.

Plan Colombia provides a comprehensive outline for action that has incorporated many of the lessons learned in El Salvador and can, if fully implemented, provide the environment for peace in Colombia. In his 21 September 1999 statement before the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control, General Charles Wilhelm, Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Southern Command, states:

I remain cautiously optimistic that Colombia, with increased U.S. support, can advance the peace process initiated by the Pastrana administration. To succeed at the peace table, the GOC must bargain from a position of strength, buttressed by consistent success on the battlefield. . . . While I share the widely held opinion that the ultimate solution to Colombia's internal problems lies in negotiations, I am convinced that success on the battlefield and the leverage that it will provide is a precondition for meaningful and productive negotiations.<sup>68</sup>

It is ultimately up to the Colombian people to resolve this conflict and, as learned in Viet Nam and reinforced in El Salvador, no amount of U.S. aid and military might can save a government unable to save itself. As Ralph Peters states, "We can only prolong the gruesome status quo."<sup>69</sup> But support from the U.S. will be vital to success. Up to now, as Marcella points out, U.S. policy has been woefully short-sighted and inconsistent in meeting the situation in Colombia and the region:

. . . by focusing almost entirely on counternarcotics, without regard for the impact on Colombia's other conflicts, U.S. policy has weakened the state's ability to deal with guerrilla and paramilitary violence. Unless that changes, the disintegration of Colombia will get much worse.<sup>70</sup>



It is imperative the U.S. establish a coherent, long-term strategy to establish peace and stability in Colombia. In the words of Drug Czar Barry McCaffrey, "We'll screw this up seriously if we don't put together a mechanism that's adequate to the challenge."<sup>71</sup> The U.S. must be prepared to stick with the program. U.N. envoy Egeland has said the Colombian peace process "is more complex than I have seen," including the 1993 Oslo peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians.

The best reason for supporting Plan Colombia with aid is that it will help in the search for a negotiated settlement for lasting peace, the strategic objective of both the U.S. and Colombia, by confronting the insurgents and paramilitaries with a credible threat. Washington must remember that while drugs are fought in Colombia, peace efforts are also vital to solving the problem. A coherent, comprehensive strategy is required. As proven in El Salvador, merely sending politically motivated aid without a long-term strategy, just hoping for success, will only make the situation worse.<sup>72</sup>

Washington needs to conclude the current debate and approve an aid package appropriate to the need and threat, balanced between meeting Colombian military needs (to show determination to end the war and leverage peace negotiations) and meeting economic and social reform needs to build civil institutions. Questions concerning the costs of the Plan must consider the cost of its failure.<sup>73</sup>

Any aid package should include a provision for auditors to ensure appropriate use of funds, for intelligence teams to monitor the situation, and for equipment and essential trainers, but there need be no involvement in or direct support to combat. Realizing the drug problem is multinational, the U.S. should work with the international community toward a coordinated effort to support Plan Colombia; a Colombian delegation has been meeting with European governments seeking some \$1 billion in aid for the "carrot" part of the Plan. Pushing a solution with only military hardware and training is pushing a recipe for further disaster; the institutions of Colombian society must be restored before real stability can return.<sup>74</sup>

Every effort must be made to ensure the GOC goes to the negotiating table in a position of

strength, supported economically, diplomatically, and with the capability to enforce pledges of security to the citizens of Colombia. The security forces, in particular the military, need to be strengthened if they are to be expected to go after the insurgents (who now control about 40 percent of the country's territory and earn over \$600 million a year from the drug trade) as well as the paramilitaries. Success against both elements is vital to providing incentive for all parties to negotiate seriously, and the GOC simply cannot afford to fight against such well financed adversaries without outside help. Success will also hinge on denial of insurgent and paramilitary sanctuary in the neighboring countries of Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, Brasil and Panama. Incursions by both elements are already commonplace and have incited deployment of host nation military elements to border regions causing unneeded expense and pressure on nations already consumed by internal issues of their own.<sup>75</sup>

U.S. aid to the military should not be limited by counterdrug constraints; Washington must accept the fact that the solution to the drug trafficking problem in Colombia is directly linked with the problem of armed groups, both insurgents and paramilitaries. Until the threat is dealt with as a whole, and not just against drug dealing, the insurgent and paramilitary grip on the country will remain. It is faulty logic that asserts it is acceptable to provide support to breaking up drug trafficking organizations and facilities but not to support fighting unpopular and violent armies with long records of kidnappings and assassination. It is better to train and equip Colombian military and police than for U.S. troops to ultimately have to be there.<sup>76</sup>

Many of the military weaknesses in Colombia track with experience in El Salvador and, like El Salvador, can be remedied by the Colombians themselves. Numbers of troops, along with their night-fighting capabilities, need to be expanded to meet the threat, as was the case in El Salvador. Colombian troops need to be employed more effectively and equitably, including changing the policy of high school graduates (some 35,000 of a total 146,300 troops) being exempt from combat duties.

Areas where the U.S. can help include:

- training and doctrine for joint and small unit operations
- training and equipment for night operations
- improvement in operational intelligence collection, analysis, dissemination
- improvement in quick reaction capabilities (airborne strike force)
- improvement in logistics supply and repair capabilities
- restructure forces and equipment to enhance lift capabilities<sup>77</sup>

Even more critical is improved law enforcement, an area where U.S. policy must be changed to allow training of the police. Judicial reform and training is also required to ensure a functioning court system that will preclude the problem of dispensing extra-judicial punishment by armed groups. Immediate changes Colombia can make include increasing prison sentences for drug offenses, reorganizing the judiciary, and taking cellular phones from jailed traffickers so they can't continue business behind bars.<sup>78</sup>

The GOC must provide the political and security climate that will allow for and attract the guerrillas and paramilitaries to enter the political arena as legitimate entities. The GOC must address the socioeconomic issues giving legitimacy to the insurgents, including land reform (perhaps with lands seized from drug lords) and rural development. These areas could provide huge bargaining leverage in peace negotiations, along with the other facets of Plan Colombia for alternative development and infrastructure projects. To attract ELN support for developing the oil industry, a percentage of oil profits could be set apart for rural development projects.<sup>79</sup>

The drug trafficker problem remains unsolved after all actions taken up to now. The U.S. has still failed to figure out how to attack the drug problem without aggravating the insurgent issue. Eradication efforts have not succeeded in reducing the amount of drugs entering the U.S., only shifted the site of their cultivation. The U.S.-imposed counterdrug campaign, based on eradication and aerial fumigation, has failed to reduce the importation of drugs and succeeded in solidifying FARC support among the coca farmers.<sup>80</sup>

It is in U.S. interests for policymakers to broaden their vision and support Plan Colombia.  
Current policies that ignore the causative issues of the insurgency and deny rural farmers the ability to earn a living only feed the conflict.

### ACRONYMS

ANSESAL: Agencia Nacional de Seguridad Salvadoreña, Salvadoran National Security Agency

ARENA: Alianza Republicana Nacional, National Republican Alliance

AUC: Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, United Self-defense Groups of Colombia

COES: Conferencia de Obreros de El Salvador, Conference of Workers of El Salvador

COPAZ: Comision de Paz, Peace Commission

ELN: Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional, the National Liberation Army

EPL: Ejercito del Pueblo de Liberacion, the People's Liberation Army

ESAF: El Salvadoran Armed Forces

FALANGE: Furezas Armadas de Liberacion Anti-comunista de Guerras de Eliminacion, Armed Forces of Liberation for Anti-communist Wars of Elimination

FARC: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia

FMLN: Frente Marti de Liberacion Nacional, Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front

FN: Frente Nacional, the National Front

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GOC: Government of Colombia

GOES: Government of El Salvador

INCORA: Instituto Colombiano de Reforma Agraria, Colombian Institute for Agrarian Reform

M-19: Movimiento 19 de Abril, 19th of April Movement

OAS: Organization of American States

ONUSAL: Observadores Naciones Unidas en El Salvador, U.N. Observer Mission in El Salvador

ORDEN: Organizacion Democratica Nacional, National Democratic Organization

PCN: Partido de Conciliacion Nacional, National Conciliation Party

PDC: Partido Democratico Cristiano, Christian Democratic Party

PNC: Policia Nacional Civil, National Civil Police

UCA: University of Central America

U.N.: United Nations

U.S.: United States of America

WTO: World Trade Organization

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>3</sup> Tom Carter, "Colombian Guerrillas Alarm Bolivia," Washington Times, 5 November 1999, 12.

<sup>4</sup> Schultz, 6-8.

<sup>5</sup> Harvey F. Kline, Colombia, Democracy Under Assault. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995) 38.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Shifter, "Colombia at War," Current History 98 (March 1999): 116-117.

<sup>7</sup> Kline, 28-29.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-31, 34, 35.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-41.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-40.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-45.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-48. The National Front had the following characteristics:

1. Presidency alternate every 4 years
2. All legislative bodies (Congress, Dept. assemblies, Municipal councils) equally divided between Liberals and Conservatives regardless of electoral results
3. Same rule of parity applies to all admin appointments not under civil service
4. No parties other than Liberal and Conservative can participate in elections
5. All legislation must pass by two-thirds majority vote in Congress
6. Minimum 10 percent of national budget must go to education
7. Women have equal political rights

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-32.

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- <sup>45</sup> Ibid., 148-149.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid., 175, 178.
- <sup>47</sup> Byrne, 123.
- <sup>48</sup> Montgomery, Revolution, 199.
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- <sup>50</sup> Ibid., 216-217.
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- <sup>58</sup> Marcella, 216.
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<sup>74</sup> Karen DeYoung, "U.S. Plans Big Boost in Aid to Colombia," Washington Post, 8 January 2000, 1.

<sup>75</sup> Tim Golden, "Colombian Leader Says U.S. Won't Be Drawn Into War," New York Times, 21 September 1999, 5.

<sup>76</sup> Michael Radu, [FPRI@aol.com](mailto:FPRI@aol.com) "Don't Subsidize Defeatism in Colombia," 8 October 1999, personal e-mail (12 October 1999).

<sup>77</sup> Marcella, 223-224.

<sup>78</sup> Tom Golden, "U.S. Antidrug Plan to Aid Colombia is Facing Hurdles," New York Times, 6 February 2000, 1.

<sup>79</sup> Marcella, 225.

<sup>80</sup> "Peacemaking in Colombia," 3.

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